



**File Code:** 1950; 2210  
**Date:** November 2, 2017

Dear Forest User;

The Fairfield Ranger District of the Sawtooth National Forest (SNF) is proposing to authorize continued sheep grazing on the Salt-Bowns, Boardman, Beaver, Kelly Creek, North Fork Lime Creek, and Bremner-Middle Fork Sheep and Goat (S&G) allotments (Faulkner Group One Project hereafter).

The Faulkner Group One project area is located about 15 miles northwest of Fairfield, Idaho, in Elmore and Camas Counties (Figure 1) and is within Management Areas (MA) 07 Little Smoky Creek, 08 Middle South Fork Boise River, 09 Lime Creek, and 10 Soldier Creek/Willow Creek as defined by the Forest Plan (USDA Forest Service 2012). The project area consists of a complex of six S&G allotments on approximately 83,130 acres of National Forest System (NFS) lands.

## Background

Historical records indicate that sheep have grazed the project area since records were kept, at least since the 1940s. Cattle grazing had also occurred on the Bremner-Middle Fork Allotment up until 2001 when the permit was converted from cattle to sheep. Three sheep bands currently graze the project area. Table 1 below illustrates permitted Head Months (HMs) in relation to each allotment and the associated sheep band number. Band 1 enters the North Fork Lime Creek S&G allotment by trailing through the Hunter Creek Cattle and Horse (C&H) allotment and crossing the South Fork Lime Creek. The band then grazes the North Fork Lime Creek and Kelly Creek S&G allotments prior to arriving at the Kelly Creek Corrals where lambs will be sorted and shipped. Band 6 enters the Salt-Bowns S&G allotment by grazing through either the Soldier Creek or the Wardrop C&H allotments. The band then grazes through the Salt-Bowns S&G allotment prior to arriving at the Salt Creek Corrals where the lambs will be sorted and shipped. Band 2 enters the Bremner Middle Fork S&G allotment by grazing through adjacent private, state, and BLM land. After grazing through that allotment the band will arrive at the Ear Creek Corrals located on state land where lambs will be sorted and shipped. After the lambs are shipped the adult dry ewes will continue to graze and may split and/or combine with other bands until they exit Forest Service lands. Sheep band numbers and amount of days grazed may vary but are limited to the permitted dates and HMs.



**Table 1. Permitted Head Months by Allotment**

Allotment	Permitted HM's	Band Number
N. F. Lime Creek	3360	1
Kelly Creek	1396	1
Salt/Bowns Creek	2538	6
Beaver Creek	2150	1/6
Boardman Creek	2133	1/6
Bremner/Middle Fork Lime Creek	4882	2

### **Purpose and Need**

NFS lands provide an important source of livestock forage during parts of the year for a variety of grazers. Current and prospective permittees desire to continue grazing and have invested in their business by purchasing base properties, livestock handling facilities, and a variety of range improvements. Furthermore, the SNF recognizes the continuing need for livestock forage production.

Section 402 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (as amended by sec. 3023 of the National Defense Appropriations Act of 2015) requires the Forest Service to “conduct environmental reviews on an allotment or multiple allotment basis, to the extent practicable . . . for purposes of compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.) and other applicable laws.” The SNF has a commitment to meet requirements for the completion of NEPA analysis and decisions.

Additionally, analysis is needed to support continued authorization of livestock grazing on the allotments at current levels and determine if current livestock management practices are sufficient for achieving and maintaining compliance with current Forest Plan direction, applicable laws, and regulations.

The purpose of this project is to aid in accomplishing the following Forest Plan goal and objective:

1. Forest Plan Goal (Vol. 1, p. III-47). RAGO01 – Provide for livestock forage within existing open allotments, in a manner that is consistent with other resource management direction and uses.
2. Forest Plan Objective (Vol. 1, p. III-82). SEOB01 – Provide a predictable supply of Forest goods and services within sustainable limits of the ecosystem that help meet public demand.



## **Proposed Action**

The proposed action for the Faulkner Group One project is based on the current permitted head months (HMs). The management direction for these allotments is contained in the term grazing permit, allotment management plan (AMP), and annual operating instructions (AOI) (FSH 2209.13-92.31). Preliminary analysis of monitoring data indicate current management practices have contributed to stable and upward trends for short and long term indicators (i.e., utilization, stubble height, forage production, ground cover, etc.) within the allotments.

Alternative A (Proposed Action) for the Faulkner Group One project would authorize 'variable season of use' and 'variable numbers,' but would not exceed permitted HMs for each allotment (see Table 1 above). Under this alternative, the grazing season would be lengthened from the season listed on the current Term Grazing Permit (June 1 to October 15) to add flexibility of an earlier "on" date and a later "off" date. However, this change does not mean the allotment can be grazed the entire season at full numbers. Annual grazing may occur within this authorized grazing season, but would be limited to authorized HMs. The grazing season would be determined annually and outlined in the AOI based on a variety of factors, such as range readiness; climatic factors (e.g., drought); resource needs identified from monitoring; and permittee needs. Adaptive management practices may also be implemented, if needed, to facilitate meeting the desired allotment conditions.

In addition to Forest Plan standards and guidelines designed to mitigate resource impacts, the Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) may identify livestock management design features applicable to the Proposed Action. These design features/permit administration activities would be incorporated in the Term Grazing Permit to reduce or prevent undesirable effects resulting from proposed management activities.

The proposed action also includes continued monitoring of the allotments through grazing permit administration, which includes inspection compliance, utilization, in-season stubble height, end-of-season stubble height, and grazing response index.

## **Request for Comments**

I invite your issues, concerns, and comments specific to this proposal so they may be considered early in the analysis. Comments that are site specific, or are based on your knowledge of the area, will better help us develop and evaluate the proposal. Although comments are welcome throughout the planning process, providing comments by December 6, 2017 will allow time for your input to be considered during analysis. Please note that comments are a matter of public record, and therefore may be provided to interested parties upon request. This project is subject to the pre-decisional administrative review process, Subparts A and B (36 CFR 218).

Electronic comments may be submitted to [comments-intermtn-sawtooth-fairfield@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-intermtn-sawtooth-fairfield@fs.fed.us); please indicate "Faulkner Group One Project" in the subject line. Electronic comments must be submitted in a format such as an e-mail message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), and Word (.docx).

Comments may also be submitted by facsimile (FAX), U.S. Mail, or hand-delivered to:

Fairfield Ranger District  
102 First Street East  
Fairfield, ID 83327  
(208) 764-3202 telephone  
(208) 764-2133 FAX

Office business hours for hand-delivered comments are 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Questions about this proposal should be directed to Renee Kehler, Team Leader, or Nathan Lancaster, District Ranger, at the address or telephone number listed above.

Future notification (mailings) will be focused on interested and affected persons. Therefore, please respond if you would like to remain on the project's mailing list, even if you do not have specific scoping comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Nathan J. Lancaster" with a stylized flourish at the end.

NATHAN J. LANCASTER  
District Ranger





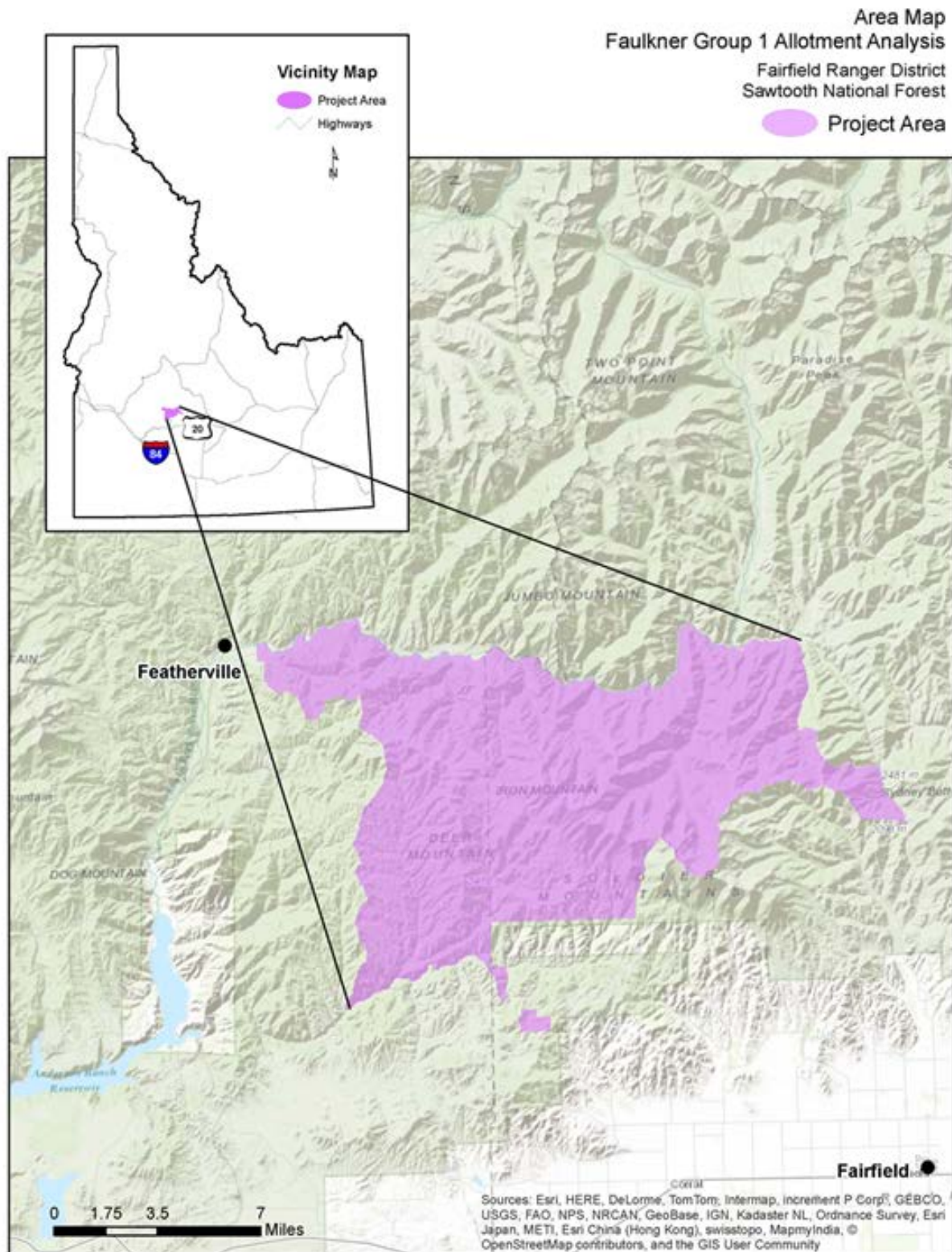


Figure 1. Faulkner Group One Project Area